

The Joy of Capoeira

Mestre Canjiquinha

*I am the joy of capoeira,
In capoeira I am the joy*



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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

In translating “The Joy of Capoeira,” I preserved as much of the original formatting, phrasing, and punctuation as possible, making only the occasional change in order to make something intelligible and readable in English. Mestre Canjiquinha’s words are simple and incredibly beautiful. Not everything he says, however, is easily understood or interpreted. The book contains some vague, confusing, and even downright contradictory statements (see Preliminary Note number 2, written by Terno e As, on the following page). I have my ideas about their meaning, but I have refrained from adding any commentary whatsoever to the text – as Preliminary note number 3 advises, “Read for yourself.”

All footnotes were added by me; they were not in the original text. I have only footnoted words which required additional explanation of their translations, certain names of places and people, and terms with which the reader may not be familiar.

Finally – enjoy! This is not a book to skim through in a rush, nor is it a book to read only once. Savor the Mestre’s words and ponder their meanings in life and in capoeira. For me, *The Joy of Capoeira* was truly a joy to read and translate.

Axé!

Shayna

PRELIMINARY NOTES

1. Assassination of grammar

While reading this book, do not be guided by the punctuation marks in it.

2. Contradictions

Sometimes on a single page there are sentences containing contradictory statements. Don't be fooled. It's exactly that. Capoeira is a game of double meaning. It has two faces that are almost never very distinct.

3. This book does not need any additional explanations.

These commentaries that were added to it are totally unnecessary. Totally. Read for yourself. They were written by Terno e As, who is, in capoeira, just a bad pandeiro player. May he be pardoned by all the capoeiristas and readers, mainly by those who think that only capoeiristas should speak and write about capoeira. Just as only bakers should speak about bread. About sweets, only the confectioners. About cake, the cake-makers. About meat... about meat? The sheep.

1. Canjiquinha is from the Time.

He is from the time in which capoeira and stuff are learned on the street. The street, “habitat of the great problems,” is commonly universalized as the school in which tricks, deceptions, *malandragem*, art, and skill – clever lessons – are learned. The support that doesn’t let us fall, to hit one’s butt on the ground when life throws us new and unexpected situations, low blows, dirty tricks, treachery.

2. From the dust.

The capoeira Negro is Utopian by his very birth. It is a question of survival. In order to preserve himself as a human being while he was a slave and also afterwards, he must fight so that his dream conquers the natural course of events that attacks him. With ways and steps to make Utopia reborn every day.

Sub-understanding: capoeira is a fight that the black man created to free himself from slavery through art; “Utopia is always a sign of non-conformity and a forewarning of revolt.”

Capoeiristas think differently from the ideologists (talking heads on weak bodies) who turn everything upside down and only interpret things and sell alien formulas about how to improve the world (and always turning things worse): the plague.

Capoeiristas (vibrant souls in bodies that are proud, even when mutilated) walk upside down. They put their heads on the ground, they twist themselves into things (knowing them from the inside), and in this twisting they produce underground ideas that serve as guides for people to transform themselves and face the world. For example: using *malícia* to free oneself from harm.

“The ideas are in the ground. I trip and I find solutions.” – Titãs

3. Painful kneecap.

“I’m only interested in what is not mine. Law of men.” May it live. Everything that can make me free and happy is in the hands of men. Law of dogs. May it die – the germ of the conflict of this daily battle between the police and the man with a capital H of Hero. It was in this war that Washington Bruno da Silva Filho, son of Canjiquinha, fell.

How cruel this life is, making it so that we feel relieved when we lose a loved one. W.B.S.F. was an example: he didn’t listen to advice even when he wasn’t so bad off.

4. Capoeira is fight, sport, a plaything...

For Canjiquinha, capoeira is preferably playfulness. Even better if there is an audience watching. In the roda, doing ginga in front of his partner, he often plays a joke (giving the *volta ao mundo* around himself). The opponent/friend follows the rules of this playfulness to the letter. Any initiation of an attack will be neutralized by a backwards chapa. The game is planned – inherited from the double-dealings and simulated combats in the rings of free-fighting, vale-tudo, and Greco-roman fighting that the mestre practiced in the 1950s and 60s.

A new joke. He stops, lifts his eyes. The audience applauds. Canjiquinha is the king. Canjiquinha is a happy boy. (I only want honor when I'm alive because after I'm dead it doesn't interest me). He generously repays the applause by unrolling his spool of varieties: capoeira, puxada de rede, maculelê, samba duro, samango, bolero, muzenza, self-defense, jokes, Vicente Celestino. Doing things that God would doubt that he could do. More applause, more things: unforgettable moments to last one's whole life.

But, every *volta ao mundo* around oneself has its risks. The opponent is not always cooperative. The result: a movement given just for flourish is curbed by a very well performed arm-lock, as a punishment – a warning that capoeira is a serious thing. The rule of playfulness was broken. Canjiquinha protests and makes a huge fuss. He defends himself by saying that fight capoeira is for enemies and that, in the roda, it's for playing with one's friends and companions.

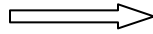
5. "As a civil servant I'm only known within the office, and as Canjiquinha I'm known in the whole world."

When we were recording the mestre's words in order to make this book, I observed that on the subjects regarding capoeira, he repeated old and well-known refrains, sayings, and maxims, always using the originality which is unique to him. He demonstrated absolutely no intention of revealing any significant and unusual facts. Very seldom did he address technical questions, and he naturally rid himself of any political responsibility regarding the rescue of capoeira's memory. Naturally, he seems to believe that the natural passage of memory can be given through fiction. Aficionados of capoeira are the people to whom he must transmit his teachings. This he does with pleasure and even for free if necessary. However, it is good to emphasize that he lit up when he made references to his gratitude to his mestre and to the old capoeiristas who taught him the art, and when he mentioned the gratitude of the students and the public.

When we were recording the mestre's words in order to make this book, I observed that he started talking more about subjects regarding his personal life. He explored the intimate and apparently lowest details of his life as a husband, father, and office worker. I got the impression that this book was the opportunity he had to remove the shadows from his other side – as a person – and to show it to the public. Putting it in a region of distinction. In a poetic zone. And, thus, reducing the difference of importance between the civil servant and the capoeirista.

It is not necessary to follow any psycho-analytical scheme of dual personalities in order to visualize the relationship that Canjiquinha established between his life as a capoeirista and his life as a civil servant.

Sunday, 1935
Matatu Pequeno, Brotas
Baixa do Tubo
Banheiro de Otaviano



**The time and place
where I began
to learn capoeira**

There, I found men
In front of the bathroom
There was a grocery store
They hung out there
Drinking *cachaça*
(This was in the interest of the owner of the bathroom)
And training
I was young and I would stay there, watching
They would hang out there, training
And I'd be there, watching
So I went every Sunday
One day
A citizen named Antônio Raimundo
Nicknamed: **Aberrê**
Appeared there

So I used to stay there just watching
He then turned to me and said,
"Come here my son! Do you want to learn?"
I said:
"Yes."
He made me crouch down
When I crouched down then I saw the foot
I jumped
And then he said:
"My son, starting today
I will train you."

Aberrê
Used a white and blue shirt
Low-cut
Full of medals
But in that time, there were no competitions

Onça Preta, Rosendo,
Chico três pedaços,
Zé de Brotas, Silva boi,
Dudu, Maré

Who was your mestre?

The Initiation



Volta ao Mundo

Eight years later...
The mestre told me:
“Go to look around
If you see something you like, keep it
If you don’t like it, leave it.”
So I went and watched the capoeiristas. I played,
I asked the now-deceased GERALDO CHAPELEIRO
I asked things and he explained them to me
He saw my interest, and he explained to me
And more people taught me
The berimbau player was Zeca do Uruguai
Every Sunday I would bring him a cigar
So that he would teach me to play berimbau
ZECA DO URUGUAI
WAS DARK
HE WAS A BOOKIE
AND HE HAD A BIG MUSTACHE

Gratitude

If today I am
Known in the whole world
I thank these men because
As a civil servant I am only
Known within the office
And as CANJIQUINHA
The whole world knows me

Learning

Every Sunday
Around this same time
Two boys
Canjiquinha and his partner Botino
Went there

My mother didn't want

My mother, being poor

When I was enjoying myself the most
The police would come – CAVALRY
In that time the police were called
The CAVALRY

After 8 or 15 days had passed, we would return to the same place
And it always ended in trouble
CAPOEIRA ALWAYS HAD TROUBLE
I LEARNED THIS WAY

And so on...
And so on...
I went on...

YES, THERE WAS POLICE REPRESSION OF CAPOEIRISTAS; CAPOEIRA WAS ALWAYS SEEN IN A BAD LIGHT

“It even existed in the area of skin color,
But in capoeira
There were already whites
That is to say: white men, but poor men
Because there were no rich people in capoeira.
It was the common people who did capoeira.
The common people were black

LOOK!!

If you were white,
You had money, you had
A son, you would never let him
Sing on the radio.
Were you crazy?
The people who sang on the radio
Were bad people.

**Drivers
Porters
Dock workers
Soccer players
Had no value
The black race
Had no value**

Especially in capoeira. Hands on the floor, dressed in any old clothing, a tattered pair of shorts.”

Nossa Senhora¹

“The police didn’t catch me because I’d run and run.

But, there was no need to bring a complaint of a capoeirista to the police.

No. Because they went in search of them and they didn’t need anyone to show them.

Because of the noise, of the chaos.

So they’d go running by the Police Station that was nearby, in Pitangueiras. Later, the CAVALRY arrived.

But one guy stayed on the lookout, and when he gave the signal, then we broke out into the alley.

Boy, I’ve seen a lot of trouble between capoeiristas and the police. There was the now-deceased Creonte: he fought a lot with the police. Now, I’ve never fought with the police, no. I’ve always been a friend of the police.

DELINQUENTS IN CAPOEIRA?

In those times there weren’t any. The hardest thing was to steal chickens. Boy, that was the biggest novelty. There were no delinquents. There could be ignorant people: who didn’t know how to read or write. But there were no delinquents. This business of delinquents started in the last eight years. That’s right... Bahia grew too much. So, there are lots of people of that nature. What did exist was men who tied their belts to each other (like I have seen in Julião) and exchanged knives, and the two fall down dead. JESUS CHRIST!”



¹ “Nossa Senhora” literally means “Our Lady.” Brazilians use it as an expression of exclamation like Americans use “Jesus Christ” or “God damn!”

The fact that you are a capoeirista, a renowned person, does this distinguish you in the office?

“No. There was never a difference. Because of that, to this day there’s never been envy of me in the office, because they treat me with the greatest affection. I have the greatest respect. I joke with all of them, even married women, but in respect, understand? There was never any distinction.”

Did your name as a capoeirista distinguish you in social environments?

“No. No. There was never a difference. I know this for sure. One time, I was in São Paulo in 1962 at the Festival of Popular Art. So I went to a theater in which only people wearing suits were allowed to enter. I was wearing a regular shirt. Then the guy at the door barred the way and the guy who was accompanying me said: ‘This is the mestre Canjiquinha.’ Then, the doors opened just because of the name. But, no. It never had, say, a place under the limelight.”

Did your name as a capoeirista help you in any way?

“Yes, it helped me with requests. I ask people for some things. I even get jobs. I’ve gotten various people jobs. Sometimes, students have me go ask the police chief to release them. It’s because of me, understand? Many things happened including one that, to say the truth, let’s get to the point. Just the other day – this was years ago – I was in the office. And a girl called:

- Canjiquinha.
- What’s up?
- Your son is in prison.

(The one who was later killed)

- Where is he?
- At the police station.

I went there, and the police chief is... doctor... I forget his name.

- Hey Canjiquinha, how’s it going?
- Pretty good.
- How can I help you?

- I’m here for one reason. My son is here, etc. etc. I don’t know what happened.

So the police chief sent for him (WASHINGTON BRUNO DA SILVA FILHO). He appeared.

- You’re the son of Canjiquinha?
- I am.

The police chief said:

- Boy, follow your father's example. Your father is an example. He never gave anyone a headache. Everyone knows him. My son, follow your father. Look, you're being freed now thanks to your father.

I thanked him very much and left.

In other words: if not for the name, you know?

Confessions with Sincerity

Today I have three houses.
Thanks to capoeira and the films in which I worked.
At that time,
I had five or six women.
Because I could.
Because of capoeira.
As a civil servant, I earned very little.
I am rewarded.

I've done much good for other people and
Other people have done much good to me.

I always liked to teach capoeira for free.
I want the students to be better than me.
I want them to get rich.

Of all the mestres alive around here,
I am the oldest in capoeira.

CANJQUINHA, IÊ
ERÊ
JOY, JOY, JOY
CAPOEIRA
BLACK RACE
SO MANY OTHER THINGS...
.....SUFFERINGS.

Emotion

1981

São Paulo

Ibirapuera Gymnasium

The Mestre Canjiquinha Trophy

Promoted by Brasília (a student)

*"I cried because the emotion was too much.
Can you imagine thirty thousand people giving me a standing ovation?
So, that for me was an emotional experience.
I cried not because of the money that I was getting,
Nor for the trophy that I was receiving.
It was because of the people who were applauding me.
And they carried me.
It was the greatest emotion that I felt in my life.
Not even as a soccer player for Ypiranga²
Did I feel such emotion in my life.
So, every year in São Paulo on August 10th
There is the MESTRE CANJIKUINHA TROPHY
Promoted by Brasília, one of my students.
This I owe to him, and he also owes it to me
He built his work on top of my name.*

*No one feeds porridge to a boy
Without licking one's fingers."*

² A soccer team, obviously.

About

“There doesn’t exist capoeira regional or angola. There exists capoeira. They called capoeira ‘angola’ because it was practiced, here in Brazil, around 1855 by the slaves, the majority of which were from Angola.

So, they stayed in the slave quarters, training. They saw that it was possible to defend themselves with capoeira. So they gave it the name capoeira angola.

BUT, CAPOEIRA IS BRAZILIAN.

CAPOEIRA IS THE ONLY BRAZILIAN SPORT.

I AM A CAPOEIRISTA. I AM NEITHER AN ANGOLEIRO NOR REGIONAL.

Because I don’t sing music in Angolan, because I’m not in candomblé. I sing capoeira and I play capoeira. Now, capoeira is in accordance with the beat. If you are at a party: if the music is bolero then you dance bolero; if the music is samba then you dance samba; capoeira is the same: if the music is leisurely you dance slow; if it plays fast you pick up your pace.

THE ONLY BRAZILIAN SPORT IS CAPOEIRA

...Angola and Regional.

Capoeira of the old times and capoeira of today

Which is better?

“THE CAPOEIRA OF THE OLD DAYS WAS A BEAUTIFUL THING
IT HAD LOTS OF MALÍCIA
YOU PLAYED WEARING PANTS, JACKET, HAT, AND TIE AND YOU DIDN’T
GET DIRTY.

ONE GUY DIDN’T HURT THE OTHER
HE ONLY LIFTED HIS FOOT AT THE RIGHT TIME.”

**“TODAY CAPOEIRA IS MORE VIOLENT
IT HAS MORE VIOLENCE
THAN CAPOEIRA ITSELF.”**

“CAPOEIRA IS A DANCE
IT IS A PHYSICAL EDUCATION.
IF IT HAS BERIMBAU AND PANDEIRO, IT BECOMES FOLKLORE
BUT IF IT HAS INSTRUMENTS (STICK, RAZOR, KNIFE, MACHETE)
IT IS A FIGHT.

IN THE OLD DAYS IT WAS DONE FOR VIOLENCE AND
THE GUY DEFENDED HIMSELF WITH ALL CERTAINTY.”

TOURISM AUTHORITIES

Juracy Magalhães
Jose Sornel
Juscelino Kubischek
Castelo Branco

Folkloric shows
Conferences
Trips
Lookout point of Ondina³

QUESTIONS

1. Were you already famous when you started to be introduced to these men and do folkloric shows?
2. At that time, did the police still persecute capoeiristas?

RESPONSES

1. “Yes. I was already famous. It happened like this: I was a civil servant of the Department of Tourism. Everything that I did and that I currently do in a street performance, I did for the governor and the tourists. Nothing better or worse. I already did shows for all those men. Capoeiristas of the time was seen as a thing of vagabonds: for people who had nothing to do. But they laughed when I explained to the public: this guy is a driver, that guy is a shoe-maker, this guy is a stonemason, that guy is a student; because in capoeira there are various professions.”
2. “Yes, they still persecuted them. But they treated well those people who did exhibitions in enclosed areas. When I went to the hotel of Bahia, there were ten or twelve soldiers keeping track of them (the authorities) there. Not keeping track of us. Same thing in the clubs. I did shows for the Military Police. I granted Diplomas. So, I was known. I was also the only mestre who taught at the Naval Base. I taught at the Naval Base for six months in 1963. It was Arquimedes who took me there, he was a sergeant of the Base.”



³ A place in Salvador, Bahia.

Aberrê had his chest full of medals

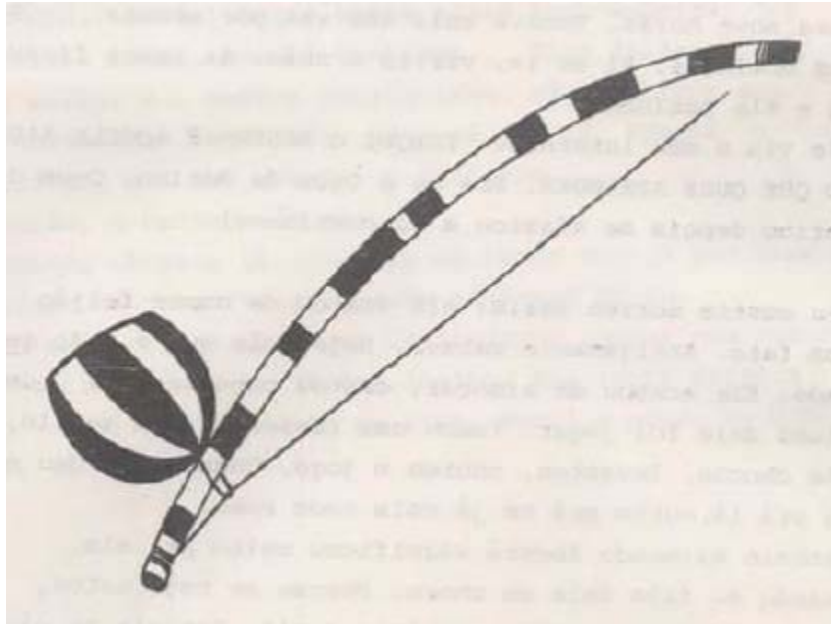
The medals, I don't think they meant anything, because at that time there were no competitions. I also had a berimbau full of medals. I had lots of key rings, so I put them on a chain and filled it with medals, and there were no competitions.

Fraud in a berimbau festival

I was wronged at a berimbau festival. I was invited by the Federation and by the Department of Tourism. At that time Salvador D'Avila who was a good friend of mine had a disagreement with me because he wanted to speak during my Show and I didn't let him speak and interrupt the Show. He got angry with me. When I went to the festival in the New Fort and I saw him in the convention I said: I'm done for. So Gato played berimbau, then Vermelho played berimbau. I played various things, and I even put the berimbau on the ground. When it was time to see who was the best, he called Gato in first place. I said nothing. Vermelho in second place. Canjiquinha in third place.

I said:

- Salvador why did you do this?
 - Well, because you put the berimbau on the ground.
 - The berimbau is mine, I'll play it however I want. You know why you did this?
- Because you're mad at me. You did this in order to put me down.



Beans with Tripe.

The death of Aberrê

“No. I never saw a capoeirista maim or kill another while playing capoeira. This is only happening today. I saw capoeiristas kill with gunshots and knife stabbings, but not playing capoeira. I’ve seen a guy finish eating lunch, play capoeira, and die. This I have seen. And actually, my mestre died like that.

(I didn’t learn capoeira by entering the roda right away. He explained things to me, kept me by his side, stayed there explaining things to me. He told me to arrive at eleven o’clock. I arrived at nine o’clock. I took the class once per week. Only on Sundays. And I went, I swept the floor. Sometimes it was just me and him alone. He saw my interest: BECAUSE THE MESTRE IS THAT STUDENT WHO WANTS TO LEARN. It was me and Ogum de Botino. Ogum de Botino later quit and I continued.)

My mestre died like this: he had just finished eating beans with tripe. It used to kill. Today it doesn’t because everything is kept frozen. He had just finished eating, and he sang capoeira in the roda. Then one of his students went to play. He took a rasteira. With that, he was shocked, he got up, and bought the game. When he did an aú over here and another over there he already fell, all purple. At the time, there was no car to take him to the Emergency Room. When he arrived at the medical center on Rua de Ajuda, he was already dead. He was angry. He died old... he died old.

Antônio Raimundo Aberrê meant a lot to me. When I speak of him, I cry. Because if today I am here before you, I thank him. Without him I would have amounted to nothing. I owe much to ZECA and ABERRÊ in terms of capoeira. Everything that I’ve been transmitting from generation to generation.

I don’t know enough proper Portuguese. I don’t have a degree in philosophy. None of that, you know? My reading is very weak. What I know of folklore, I pass on to many people. To many intellectuals. To many writers. You understand? This very name of Canjiquinha is known around the whole world. It’s written in English, German, French. Makes me feel good. Do you know why? Whether they say good things or bad things, I want them to be talking about me.

Now, in all truth: I never went down a bad path. My father pretty much took off to Ilhéus.⁴ He abandoned my mother. I stayed back with my mother. I went to work as a shoemaker. At 14 years old I had to help my mother. I entered in the Town Hall in 1944. My mother died, and I had to do the burial. I never went astray.

Being the famous Canjiquinha is normal for me. We shouldn’t get puffed up with success. Because it dies. It’s normal. Now I was always playful.”

⁴ Another city in Bahia, south of Salvador.

Tough Women

MARIA DOZE HOMENS – Called this, because she fought with twelve men (twelve Police soldiers) in the Baixa dos Sapateiros.
She lived in Saúde.

MARIA AVESTRUZ – She lived in Boca do Rio.⁵

PALMEIRÃO – Killed Pedro Porreta (a capoeirista who was a bully). Lived on Rua 28 de Setembro

“I’ve had many female students. Like Fátima, a professor of physical fitness who today lives in Volta Redonda.”



“THE MESTRE TRAINED HIS STUDENTS NORMALLY AND LATER HE WOULD SEND OTHER STUDENTS TO GET THEM IN THE STREETS AS A TEST.

It’s like this: you’re my student today, train this guy here and this other more experienced guy. And then I would say: Príncipe (current student of the mestre, 1988), stay there on the corner. And I would send you to pass by there... you would go pass by innocently. Príncipe would beat you up so that you would defend yourself.

At the time, this was called quebrar no beco.⁶ Because of this the true capoeirista does not pass right next to an alley. You can see it: he distances himself by two meters. If you walk without evil intention, you pass right next to the corner. When you walk with me, notice that I go two meters to the side when I pass by a corner.

IT’S SUPERSTITION.”

⁵ Baixa dos Sapateiros, Saúde, and Boca do Rio are all places/neighborhoods in Salvador.

⁶ It means “to break in the alley.”

Today capoeira is a business

IN THE OLD DAYS – Capoeira was more beautiful, it was danced.

TODAY – It is more violent. It is commercial.

EXPLANATION – There was no karate, there was no judo.

COMMENTARY – I was a contra-mestre of Pastinha, in 1950. That Japanese guy came to take pictures. We would stand still. He was there making marks, marking the positions. Later, karate appeared here in Bahia. Then, capoeira's popularity decreased, decreased. Then, the youngest capoeiristas sought to make violence. So that capoeira could be shown to be more violent than karate. Capoeira stayed in this aggression. Because of this, it grew too much. Because if it had stayed that beautiful to-and-fro game, then karate would have won out. You see that five years ago all anyone talked about was karate.

But today, all everyone talks about is capoeira.

Do you think this change was necessary? Is violence necessary in capoeira?

“No. Here's the thing: If you're inside the academy, training with your colleague, there is no violence. You can even train fast. Now, if you're playing in the street, and the guy resorts to violence, then you have to resort to violence as well. An academy teaches you to play capoeira, it doesn't teach you to fight. Now, in the street you have to resort to what you know if the person disrespects you. Sometimes, you're alone... you have to resort to what you know, right?

CAPOEIRA IS A FIGHT. IT IS A VIOLENT FIGHT.
YOU SEE: SOMETIMES YOU'RE AT THE BOTTOM, SOMETIMES YOU'RE AT THE TOP. THE GUY IS PLAYING; HE DOESN'T KNOW WHERE YOU ARE.
CAPOEIRA IS THE WORST FIGHT IN THE WORLD. I KNOW THIS, BECAUSE I HAVE DONE BOXING, I HAVE DONE FREE-FIGHTING.”

The Aberrê Bahia Group

“This I’ll confess to you:

Look! I was the first one to put samba de roda in capoeira, in the Radio Society with the now-deceased Jota Luna and Milton Barbosa.

Later I put puxada de rede⁷ into capoeira.

So I presented samba de roda and explained it.

Afterwards, I presented puxada de rede and explained the history of puxada de rede.

Afterwards, there was samba de caboclo⁸ and maculelê.⁹

And finally I presented capoeira, introducing the name for each attack: martelo, ponteira, rabo de arraia, chapéu de couro... because the public wants to know.

Afterwards came the Aberrê Bahia Group.

On Sundays, I’d gathered my students and go perform.

But, all this, the person who did this, who introduced all these things into folkloric shows was your servant.”

FOLKLORE, MONEY, AND MAGIC CHARMS

“I know many songs of capoeira and of samba de roda. It’s a gift I have.

At that time, I had a good memory. So, I learned the songs quickly and easily.

I learned them in the candomblé ceremonies. I’d watch my mother and my aunt playing and singing.

There was samba de roda at birthday parties.

I taught my students as I teach you: let’s stay here training, because you have to sing as well.

Any of my students knows how to play instruments and sing, because it is the obligation of the mestre to know in order to transmit the knowledge.

My folkloric group had: two outfits of Iansã, two outfits of Oxum, two outfits of Omulú, two outfits of Ogum, two outfits of Nanã – every type of saint had two outfits.¹⁰

Samba de roda, I had over fifty outfits.

I had skirts to do samba de roda, samba corrido, chula.

I had lots of beads and canes.

But I was also exploited in capoeira. That’s right.

They would cast candomblé spells. They used me a lot.

They would jinx me. I paid no attention.

In the squares, I was the one who earned the most money.

At that time, between 1955 and 1970, I was the one who walked with the most money in my pocket. Sometimes I filled up a whole bag.

However, I was used by my friends, but I don’t want to give their names here.

⁷ Fishermans’ dance

⁸ Samba de caboclo and samba de roda are apparently two types of samba, but I’m not sure exactly how they differ.

⁹ Another Afro-Brazilian dance, performed with sticks or machetes.

¹⁰ These are the names of orixás, deities of the Afro-Brazilian religion called candomblé.

I saw the atabaque full of curses.

Then, I decided to quit in 1973. I quit everything. I sold everything for 10 mil-réis.¹¹

I got it into my head... I had the will to quit.

It could only be a curse. I believe in spells.

Many times I'd be on my way to do a show in Ondina and, halfway there, I'd turn around and come back. I did that many times.

~~~~~  
After everything ended, the wife of Governor Fernando Wilson showed up. She insisted and insisted...

I went to the City Park. I taught there for three years. Afterwards I didn't feel like it anymore.

I stopped. I only wanted to travel to events outside of Bahia. Now, in 1988, this new opportunity arose: The Academy of Canjiquinha and Friends, in the Colina do Mar.

This broke the spell. It broke the enchantment.

Today, when Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday arrive, the days of the classes, I'm happy. I'm can't wait for these days to arrive."

## **Things of a singer and a husband**

I sang in clubs.

In Barão, in Oceânia, in Pigalli.

I never sang for drinks. I never drink.

I only chased women, understand?

I'd get one, and then leave.

Sometimes I was like a type of gigolo, you know?

Soon enough I'd put one under my arm and leave.

When I arrived home, Ivone (the mestre's wife) said:

- Where were you?

I said:

- Ivone, I had to do a show. When it ended I had to do another one.

I showed her the money I earned as a singer and she believed me. I married Ivone in 1955. I never married another woman, no. Though I had other men's women. Now, I have a son by another woman, his name is Joilton. He's 17 years old (in 1988) and lives in Rio. I have five children with my wife and also I have Cláudia, the daughter who I have raised since she was one month old. She is registered in my name, because her mother and father brought her to me. I thought it right to take care of the child.

Two years later, I gathered the family and said:

- We are raising this little girl. If I die tomorrow, she will be abandoned.

---

<sup>11</sup> Mil-réis were a former unit of currency in Brazil.

- Then we consent to you registering her.  
So I registered her. Her name is Cláudia Bruno da Silva.  
She doesn't know who her mother is.  
Once her father passed by and gave her his blessing.  
After he left, I said to her:  
- That is your father.  
And she said:  
- No. You're my father; you've taken care of me since I was small.

## **A GOOD CAPOEIRISTA DOES NOT FALL BUT WHEN HE FALLS, HE FALLS WELL**

**The worst shame for a capoeirista  
Even today  
Is to fall on his butt  
If you take a rasteira  
You can fall on your support  
But if you put  
Your butt on the ground  
Imagine the shame!**

### **Muzenza, Samango, and Samba de Roda**

If Mestre Bimba created regional, I thought it alright to create muzenza and samango.  
They're played differently on the instruments and in the roda.  
I got the idea like this: I arrived in candomblé and I heard the rhythm playing: It's muzenza, it's muzenza. I played it on the berimbau.  
And then I said: how will I play to this?  
So I trained alone in front of the mirror.  
Then I started Manuel, the now-deceased Simpátia, and Gerônimo training the movements. I saw that it worked.  
It's muzenza.

Samango,  
I felt like creating a rhythm.  
I created samango.  
So, the dance is different.



I trained dancing on the side.  
Samango is very violent, it has flying takedowns, it has everything.  
At the time, the other mestres complained.  
The new ones didn't. The new ones liked it.  
Even a student of Bimba did that in São Paulo.  
The new ones always supported it, because they felt that it was good stuff.

Leaving the bitterness of the old mestres aside, I put the samba de angola in capoeira.  
I used to parade with samba schools.  
Then I started to play the berimbau in the parades.  
And I said: this works.  
So I added the toque samba de angola.  
I started to do samba de angola.  
And play capoeira while dancing samba.

## **Relationship with other capoeiristas**

Honestly I've never had a quarrel with any capoeirista. Only with my friend Caiçara once in a while. I always got along well with Mestre Pastinha, with Mestre Bimba, with Valdemar, with Cobrinha Verde. I always got along well, because I had to be smart about it. Because I needed them. Because they were older. Therefore, I wasn't going to fight with those men.

The best capoeiristas that I knew were: Geraldo Chapeleiro, Totonho Maré, and the now-deceased Curió. Now, the best in ignorance was Mestre Bimba.<sup>12</sup>

IGNORANCE?

As a mestre. In other words: to resort to aggression. No one knocked him down. They didn't knock him down out of fear. He put many people on the ground.  
His hand alone...

## **There goes Canjica,<sup>13</sup> singing life**

FATHER'S NAME: José Bruno da Silva.

MOTHER'S NAME: Amália Maria da Conceição.

"Thus by the names you can see that they were not married. My father was married to another woman, who I never knew."

---

<sup>12</sup> The word used here for "ignorance" is synonymous with "violence."

<sup>13</sup> Canjiquinha, the mestre's nickname, is the affectionate diminutive of Canjica. Canjica is maize porridge.

“My mother had a life that was a little bit tiring. A little bit sacrificing. My father neglected my mother. She was a dressmaker and she became a laundrywoman.”

PLACE OF BIRTH: All of Brazil knows where I was born. Everyone knows where I was born. I was born in Maciel de Baixo, number 6 – on top of the Nicanor grocery store.

“When I was a boy, I was very mischievous.”

“So I went along, along I went, and later my mother moved to Girassol, washing clothes and barely making ends meet, you understand... and I arrived in the Maciel in the store and said,

Half a buck of flour  
Half a buck of sugar  
Half a buck of onion  
Half a buck of garlic  
The guy gave me all that

My mother told you  
To send a piece of dried meat  
In that time you didn't buy by the weight  
He'd bring it to the house  
My mother made that food, that angu

Later I moved to Matatú Grande  
There where Pastinha had his Academy  
Before having the Academy next to the Sangradouro

And I was used to the movies  
Jandaíia and the old Olímpia  
And I saw those types Tarzan and Alligator  
And I climbed the avocado tree  
To get an avocado  
When I grabbed the avocado  
A possum appeared  
I said:

- Look, mom, an alligator!

My mother said:

- Come down my son.

So I jumped down and hit my head on the glass, and that's why I have this cut on my head.

And so on, and so forth  
I went on to learn the profession of shoe-making  
Whatever money I earned I'd give to my mother  
To help things  
I had two younger brothers and a sister

Called Lili.

When I saw my mother's hardship,  
I went to carry pots for Mr. Rubens  
Who worked in the Customs House,  
Earning 500 mil-réis per month  
And it wasn't enough  
My mother paid for a house of 30  
It wasn't possible  
Washer-women in that time earned very little

And so on, and so forth  
Then I went on to moving cargo at the street market with a donkey  
I was twelve years old  
All this 'till I was twelve  
But I already knew capoeira

Then one day a citizen named Marcelino,  
May God put him in a good place,  
Saw my suffering to help my mother  
Because I was a good son  
And because of this, God helps me today  
That guy Marcelino said  
- Come here Canjiquinha, come here with me,  
And went with me to Matatu  
Arrived in the mill and spoke with another guy, saying  
The boy has no father, and he helps his mother  
Let's put him to work in the Town Hall  
And he gave me a hand-cart and a shovel  
I'd fill up the cart but I didn't have enough strength to carry it  
This was in 1942

Then one day a director named Milton said:  
- Ramalho, who is this kid?  
- Oh no, he's not a kid, he's a man.  
- All yellow and skinny like that?  
- No, no; he's a man.  
- But it's not right.  
And then Dr. Ramalho called him into a corner and explained the situation, and he let me  
continue working in the Town Hall.

I received at the time  
70 mil-réis  
Do you know what I did?  
I kept 20 in the woods and gave 50 to my mother

And he made all the purchases  
And gave me 2 mil-réis  
To buy a reel for flying kites  
In 1942 I was seventeen years old

And so on, and so forth  
And I got my mother out of washing clothes. I said to her:  
Oh, my mother  
Starting today you will no longer wash clothes

But she had one customer for who  
She had already washed for a long time  
So she kept washing for him  
And it looks like the house where he lived is today  
The house of the Town Hall employees  
It used to be a boarding house  
So she continued washing for this man  
After I saw her weariness I said  
- Mother, you will never again have to do this  
At that time I earned 70 mil-réis  
It was a lot of money, enough to make lots of purchases

So I started to help my mother  
One day I was working in Nazaré  
Singing, you know?  
A guy showed up and said:  
- Canjiquinha, go home. Your mother has died.

My mother died.  
I dashed out of there  
When I got home, I inquired  
The now-deceased Mr. João told me:  
Your mother passed away, accept it  
Then I told the now-deceased Casemiro  
(Who had a grocery store in Matatu)  
He lent me 60 mil-réis  
And I did the burial  
Afterwards I paid him back over eight months  
Thank God, it was the greatest thing in my life  
I buried my mother  
This is why I say  
I have always been a good son  
A good friend and a good colleague  
Now, I have my moments... you know?  
Like any other human being

My mother lived with me my whole life  
I said to my brother Gentil  
Who nowadays is better off than me  
- Look here brother, I'll put a roof over your head and food on your plate  
But you are going to find work  
Because I won't let you  
Fly kites all day long

When my mother died I was 18 years old  
I was the oldest child

I talked with Mr. Ramalho  
And Mr. Ramalho put my brother in the mill  
As a painter  
He worked and learned the trade of painting  
Today he's a great painter  
He retired as a master  
And he has a painter's workshop on Barros Reis street

I always tried to help my brother

I did so many things in my life that I don't even remember



### **About Maciel de Baixo**

Maciel de Baixo, located near the Pelourinho, which is a Patrimônio da Humanidade.<sup>14</sup>  
The Historical Center of the City of Salvador  
I was born in the Maciel de Baixo, number 6, in 1925, yes.  
I was baptized in the Igreja da Sé, yes.  
I lived there, my mother was very popular, yes.  
The owner of the grocery store was a good friend of my father.  
My father was a tailor. He had a great value.  
A master tailor, yes.  
We lived there, above the grocery store.  
When my father left, my mother couldn't pay the rent.  
So she left the place, because only important people lived there.  
Where did Mangabeira live?  
Only noble families lived there.  
It's not the low prostitution that it has today, no.  
The Maciel and the Terreiro de Jesus were of noble families.

---

<sup>14</sup> Literally, "Heritage of Humanity."

## **Samba de roda, candomblé, and puxada de rede**

In that time, poor people couldn't pay for an orchestra.  
Not even a guitar player or saxophone player.  
The poor celebrated their birthdays:  
With samba de roda.  
My mother and my aunt celebrated Santo Antônio.  
After they prayed they used to do:  
Samba de roda.  
So, I learned samba de roda with them.

My sister Lili, who is alive,  
And my aunt Clonildes, who is dead:  
Practiced candomblé.  
And of course inside there I learned everything.  
But, I never went into the fundamentals. I learned the songs.

My mother practiced candomblé.

I learned puxada de rede with time.  
I used to leave Matatu and go to Boca do Rio,  
Where the Jardim de Alá is.  
They called it the Chega Nego.  
I went there with the now-deceased Péricles.  
He went on horseback, with me on the hindquarters.  
There, I saw the guys singing.

Thus I started to learn,  
Pulling the original net. Original.  
Anyone could enter and pull,  
He was helping the fishing.  
That was a real job.

In the Chega Nêgo, there was capoeira.  
The fishermen owned that place.

The lands in between Matatu and Boca do Rio belonged to that governor who died.  
Joventino. In the old days, Matatu and Cosme de Fárias belonged to just one person.  
That's why I say:

LAND HAS NO OWNER.  
THE OWNER IS HE WHO IS THE OLDEST  
AND WISEST WHO TAKES CARE  
OF EVERYTHING.

## Street fights

Yes, I have fought  
What modern boy doesn't fight?  
I've even fought because of a student  
Someone wanted to belittle a student and I didn't keep quiet  
Yes, I have fought a lot  
I went out with the student and I was responsible for him  
This guy wanted to beat him up and I didn't let him  
In fights I resorted to free-fighting  
And also Caiçara and Paulo dos Anjos  
Have fought because of me

No, I never carried a weapon, no  
No because of the following  
I was not the son of a father  
So I was scared of doing these crazy things  
I only counted on my aunt Bitú

Only once when I went to Brasília  
I was at the Belvedere da Sé  
To catch the bus at five o'clock in the morning  
So it was me, Papagaio, and Madame Gení  
To buy the pastries at the Ladeira da Praça

The police showed up and said  
- Let's go to the station  
I said  
- No, I'm not going  
Going, not going, the police weren't going to go down there  
It was a public area  
I said  
- I'll go  
And I went

When we arrived at the police station  
The guys were there  
With their faces broken  
And the discussion began  
The commissioner said  
- What happened?  
So I said  
- It was like this  
I explained to him  
He said

- Your case is very difficult  
But he didn't record it in the book  
He put it on paper

When I looked at the clock I saw it was 4 o'clock  
- My God what will I do?  
The bus leaves at 5  
- Please sir, give permission  
This revolver here is not mine, no  
It's his  
That when he pushed I kicked and caught and waited  
And then the situation worsened  
- My God what will I do?  
The bus leaves at 5  
And I put my hands in my pockets  
Hurry hurry  
- I have to travel  
The commissioner noticed  
He said  
- How much?  
He looked  
- Come here and give it to me

So the money freed me and I left

He freed me  
I arrived at Belvedere at exactly 5 o'clock  
And the bus arrived so that we could travel

The next day, it was published in the newspaper

## Religion

I'm an apostolic Roman Catholic who doesn't know anything. I'm a Greek Catholic, you know? I believe in God, but I don't go to church. When you go to church the priest talks about politics and agrarian reform. I believe in all the saints. There's no Oxossi, Xangô, nor Oxalá.<sup>15</sup> Everything is holy. In truth only one saint exists, which is God, who is the three persons of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are the beings who hear us. If we are here talking, conversing, we have them to thank.

---

<sup>15</sup> Deities of candomblé.



## **Living only from capoeira and not from other work**

Mestre Bimba worked with furniture. He left his profession to live off of capoeira. Now he earned lots of money, and built houses in the Northeast. Valdemar was a worker. He didn't live off of capoeira. He only did it on Sundays and holidays. Caiçara was always a civil servant. I never lived off of capoeira. The people who live off of capoeira, with all respect, are the people today. In the old days you couldn't live off of capoeira because it wasn't possible.

At one point, Bimba tried to live only off of capoeira and earned lots of money and then went to decadence. He had one Academy in Maciel and one in the Northeast. He had a butcher's shop, he had a grocery store, he had everything and he did various shows. One of his students messed with his head and convinced him to go to Goiás. Have you ever seen a 70-year-old guy teach capoeira? He can have a name, but he can't teach. Besides the butcher's shop he has six more houses, because in Mestre Bimba's Academy you couldn't enter if you didn't pay. He only wanted rich students.

I always liked to divide the profits from my shows with my students. Because if I didn't divide the profits, they wouldn't go. When I agreed to a show for 200 mil I would say, - Look, it works out to such-and-such for each one, do you want to go?

Whoever didn't want to go didn't go.

I was never lacking for students. It was the mestre who paid more. I've helped many students financially. Many of them have also helped me.

### **Grief**

You asked about grief? Everyone has grief. I do, in fact. Because the public powers of Bahia don't help. They only help artists from outside. I've tried to return to the Folkloric Center (1987) and I still haven't succeeded.

|                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| How did Pastinha die? | In poverty.        |
| Bimba died            | In poverty.        |
| Cobrinha Verde died   | In poverty.        |
| How is Valdemar?      | With difficulties. |

These are the things that disgust us. You show up in Japan, in the U.S., and if the artist has a name then the government pays for him. Here it's different. If you don't work you die of hunger.

If I say to the governor:

- I'm so-and-so, I would like you to give me an instrument.

- Come today, come tomorrow

Come today, come tomorrow.

He wraps up the matter and doesn't give.

## **How have you reconciled your life as a sporting artist with your life as a civil servant?**

My name has influenced and helped.

Back when the director of the department was Dalva and the secretary of the Town Hall Secretary of Education was Célia Nogueira, they knew that I had this artistic activity. I only worked until noon. From noon until the afternoon I went to train. And they let me off work when I had a show. At that time, I worked in the mimeograph. It wasn't a Xerox. Anyone can operate a mimeograph.

I traveled a lot, representing Bahia in other states. I went to Rio, to the Festival of Popular Art in São Paulo. There was just me, Pastinha, and Bimba. And I was the only one who did a complete folkloric show. I did capoeira, maculelê, samba de roda, puxada de rede, samba de caboclo. I did everything, so I went. In 1981, when Barbuda was the secretary, an invitation arrived asking me to teach capoeira in the City Park and he let me off. I like the two types of work: the artistic work and that of a civil servant.

### **Capoeira and the political campaign**

I'll explain it to you: Think of a comparison:  
Tomorrow the King of France comes here  
And he calls me to do capoeira  
So that he can see the tradition of Bahia. This would not be politics.

I'll confess to you that I don't know much about politics today  
Much less thirty years ago.

I was never involved with any politician  
I never campaigned for anyone using capoeira.

When the President Médici, Garastazul came here  
I was the one who did the show in the palace  
There was lots of security  
And as incredible as it seems  
Believe it if you want  
When the show ended he got up and came to talk to me  
He came to thank me and shake my hand  
So I grabbed a berimbau and gave it to him  
It was even the berimbau that I used in the Pagador de Promessa.<sup>16</sup>

In Brasília I went to do a show

---

<sup>16</sup> A film containing a capoeira scene in which Canjiquinha participated.

- So-and-so is here.  
Because of the name it filled up with people  
And Juscelino Kubhicheque went to watch.

In São Paulo I went to the inauguration party of Ibirapuera  
And I brought two Bahian women to make acarajé<sup>17</sup>  
Imagine, acarajé in São Paulo!  
I took two bags of beans, a can of oil, and everything. It was not politics.

## Putting one's name on one's back

It was easier for me to get well-known because of the following: one colleague helps another. I helped my colleagues and they helped me. So, there was Gildete (who is still alive), who calls me her father; and Irací Muniz. These people worked at the reception in the Department of Tourism, where I was a civil servant. They saw my work as I did it.

So when a tourist arrived they would say:  
- Look! In such-and-such place there is capoeira. There's Mestre Bimba, Mestre Pastinha... they said: The best is Mestre Canjiquinha. Not because he works here, no. If you go there tomorrow and don't like it, he'll return your money.

And the tourist would go see.  
When they arrived, I did things that God wouldn't believe. The journalists also helped a lot. I myself made my name Canjiquinha. I put it on my back. And I went along, I suffered a lot. There was lots of criticism. The newspaper put me on the top, and a little while later put me on the bottom.

My friend Caiçara wanted to beat me up. I paid no attention, because that's the thing. Because people have to suffer if they want to make a name for themselves. When I was young, I didn't cause trouble. I walked beautifully. Today I walk in any way I want. Black men accept me, because a man is a product of his environment. If you walk in a good environment, everyone accepts you. If you walk in a bad environment, no one wants you.

You see:  
I am the joy of capoeira  
I play with one, I play with another,  
I play with a student, I play with the public

Even if I have a problem at home  
(Because we all have problems at home)  
I don't bring it to the academy

---

<sup>17</sup> A traditional Bahian food, of African origin, made of beans fried in palm oil, vegetables, and sometimes pepper and shrimp.

I am joyful  
I am joyful  
I am joyful

I am joyful  
I like to play around  
Because of this I am  
The joy of capoeira

I am joyful  
I am joyful  
Anywhere in Brazil  
I am this way

I don't understand capoeira  
In that military regime:  
The soldier respects the corporal  
The corporal respects the sergeant  
For me everything is equal  
That's why I'm joyful

That's why I'm joyful and satisfied  
I feel good when I'm doing  
That which I like  
I am the joy of capoeira

Even in the office I'm this way  
I was always this way  
I was always this way joyful joyful joyful

I am the joy of capoeira  
I was always this way  
I was a mischievous boy  
Who was born in September  
The month of Cosme and Damião  
I'm always joyful

I do everything laughing  
I learned while laughing  
When I teach I teach laughing  
Canjiquinha has a laugh that I don't know what it is

I think it's awesome when a person  
Does things for fulfillment, desire, and joy  
And not for money

Many times the mestre has hatred  
Because he is earning money  
When the student doesn't pay, his face gets angry  
I am different: I am joyful and satisfied  
I am different:  
If here a student doesn't pay me, I don't make an issue of it  
I continue with the same joy

I am like this: when I see that the guy wants to put his feet before his hands, then he leaves. But if he's a cool guy then he stays his whole life  
This happens because I am the joy of capoeira

Even playing soccer I was like this  
I made joy, many pirouettes, like a clown  
I sang!!! As always I was joyful  
Joyful!!! Joyful!!! Joyful!!!

At the time when I learned capoeira, 1935,  
It was the hardest time  
The mestres were serious, with fixed ideas  
But I was always joyful

I was always joyful  
And because of this I managed  
They saw my joy  
And taught me

And so much that, there's a book around  
Bahia for conversation starters  
That says the following:  
Canjiquinha has a laugh that I don't know what it is  
Because everything that I do  
I do laughing

They say around here: Canjiquinha only knows how to play around  
This doesn't offend me  
When it's time to play around, I play around  
When it's time to play serious, I'm serious

Antônio Diabo, Burro Inchado, Madame Geni, Victor Careca, Robertão – my students  
Are all alive  
When it's time to play mean they play mean  
Sometimes at parties  
No one wants to play with my students

There are people who think  
That I was a student of Bimba  
Now at the time I was doing a show  
The show was joy  
I couldn't show an angry face to the public  
Even though I don't have any money in my pockets  
The public deserves respect  
We have to make joy  
I am a factory of joy

### **Mandinga**

The mandinga of capoeira in my way of understanding things:

When two guys who know each other play capoeira  
They are friends  
There is no mandinga at all  
One knows the other  
There is no cruelty

Every person who is a mandingueiro is wicked

You're playing with a stranger  
You play closed  
Then you're a mandingueiro  
You don't open up for him  
In the old times it was said  
- He's tricky  
- He's a mandingueiro

It was said that that was mandinga  
So in the old times it was said  
So-and-so is malicious, a mandingueiro, a head-butter

So the guy who's a mandingueiro  
This doesn't mean that he's in candomblé, no  
Candomblé is not mandinga  
Candomblé is totally different  
It has nothing to do with it

I know what a mandingueiro is  
It's ginga  
Go over there, my brother  
Come over here, my brother

That's why he's called a mandingueiro  
It has nothing to do with religion

|                                            |
|--------------------------------------------|
| <b>Capoeira has a beginning but no end</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|

Look!  
Capoeira has a beginning but it has no end.  
Really. This is a reality.  
This is a very important subject.  
Capoeira begins; you know where it begins; but no one knows how it ends.  
Thirty years from now capoeira will have a beginning and an end, like judo and karate,  
after they put regulations on everything.  
When they dot the i's and cross the t's.  
Then capoeira will have a beginning and an end.  
It will not exceed the space defined for it.  
But, since capoeira is still folklore and sport, you know when it begins, but you don't  
know how it ends.  
Thus, you sing a song, and I sing it in a different way. It can even be the same song with  
different lyrics.  
So capoeira still has a beginning, but it does not have an end.  
This is very important.

Capoeira is joy  
It is pleasure  
Because when you're playing  
You're amusing yourself  
It's something you do because of  
Spontaneity, desire, and joy.

How it happens...  
No one was born for a seed.  
I could even die tomorrow.  
So, one of my students, or any other person will work on top of me.  
Not to have joy?  
The pleasure of doing that with me. For me?  
A documentary about a person who died  
Is a satisfaction for him.  
Sometimes it is a satisfaction for him and revolting to the family, if they did it without the  
family's permission.

I believe that that which a human being does for the public is the black on white.

We have to speak the reality and not say anything that didn't happen after the individual dies, because then he can't defend himself.

I always say: my life is an open book.

I've played, I've hit, I've gotten beaten up.

The only things I have never done are those which I shouldn't do as a citizen of the city

### **About the base of capoeira**

I know the base of capoeira.

I have 53 years of experience in it.

I know what is good and what is harmful.

I know the base of capoeira.

I don't have formal Portuguese because my parents didn't have the resources to educate me. They put me in the Fernandes Azevedo school in the Pelourinho.

But I couldn't continue studying and I had to abandon the studies to care for my mother.

The base of capoeira for you to teach is for you to start at the bottom.

You have to explain to the student the first attacks and the first defenses – for the beginning of the capoeirista in the sport.

### **People are saying that it's your students who kick the highest**

This is the point I wanted to address. I teach the student to play low and high. I don't teach only low capoeira, because I learned like this. Because I'm not from Angola. I was born in Brazil, in Salvador. I didn't learn capoeira in Nigeria. Thus, this business of capoeira from Angola is an illusion. In fact, there is no capoeira in Angola.

Now, there are some mestres who play completely crunched up, but I don't. I play as much high as I do low. The game can be locked up or loose. I learned with Aberrê. He also played with high kicks. Look at the film Vadição, the now-deceased Curió plays low and high quickly. He even gives a very beautiful meia lua de frente, right? Now, if you don't know the person, you'll give a low meia lua. And if you know the person, there's no cruelty and you're playing with a friend of yours, you lift your leg.

### **Today, you have traveled a lot to participate in various capoeira-related events, batizados, trophies, championships, and meetings. How do you feel since you are so important?**

I think this is a very important thing. Even though I'm not earning any money or anything. If you want to honor me, do it while I'm alive. This is why it's important for



the world to know that I exist. It's very important for example an event. You introduce me to the public. So the public ends up knowing who I am. Sometimes you think I'm a humble person. And you see that I'm a modest and playful person. My joy overflows. It's awesome for me to know that in Brazil's history my name is written as homage to my work. I am Canjiquinha and I made my name so famous after much suffering. I am Canjiquinha, a damned and abused boy. The joy of capoeira.

## *Mrs. Ivone*

*In that time... I sang a lot  
(To my wife who today is Ivone)*

*At the time, she was 14 years old  
But I was deceived  
By her appearance  
I thought she was older*

*And so  
I started to like her.  
And so on  
And so forth  
When one day, Saturday,  
When Ypiranga and Bahia<sup>18</sup> were playing  
She passed by my house.*

*And so  
I said  
- Hi Ivone, how's it going?  
I said,  
Come here...  
Talking and chatting.*

*And then  
I said  
- I'm going away*

---

<sup>18</sup> Two soccer teams.

*I'm going to training camp*

*I played for Ypiranga*

*I went away*

*And then, the other day*

*Her grandfather knocked on my door*

*He said:*

*- Good day.*

*I responded:*

*- Good day.*

*He said:*

*- You're Canjiquinha, right?*

*I said:*

*- I am.*

*- Because I'm hearing that you like my granddaughter.*

*- I do.*

*He said:*

*- It's on your conscience.*

*(I didn't owe him anything.)*

*I said:*

*- In what sense?*

*- You two are going out.*

*- But I don't owe her anything,*

*I like her,*

*I'm going to marry her.*

*(I was already 25 years old)*

*And so*

*I went to get the documents*

*Me and her*

*Now, look at the coincidence*

*In life*

*I being Washington Bueno da Silva*

*And she Ivone Bueno da Silva*

*I arranged two witnesses  
Romario something-or-other da Silva  
And some other guy da Silva  
Everything da Silva*

*And so  
I arrived at the registry office  
Everyone was relatives*

*To make sure that  
No one was related*

*And so  
I went to the delegacy  
I sought a guy there  
Who knew how to do the documents*

*And then I got married  
She was 14 years old  
She didn't know how to do anything*

*When I came home  
I would do everything  
And teach her*

*When I traveled  
I would bring her with me  
And leave her in my aunt's house  
Because she was a girl, a little girl*

*Today  
She knows things  
That God himself would doubt*

*I taught her capoeira  
After she had our first son,*

*Janduir*  
*I was teaching in Cosme de Fárias*  
*Inside my house*  
*Where I taught Brasília, Manoel...*  
*And many students.*

*So she saw it and said:*  
*Canjiquinha, I'm going to learn.*

*I started to teach her and Janduir.*

*And so*  
*She was learning and*  
*So on, and so forth, and so on.*  
*And*  
*She often taught me*  
*(Because I stayed at the office until 8 P.M.*  
*And she stayed home training the whole day.)*

*Manoel used to try to take Ivone down*  
*And he couldn't do it.*

*After the first and second child*  
*She could no longer train.*

## **PURPOSE OF LIFE**

After my mother died  
I was very concerned with not going wrong  
Because I was practically raised  
Without mother or father  
Because bad things always existed  
Today it is more advanced  
In the old days it was more hidden

So my concern

Was to be a man  
Because I didn't have  
A father or a mother

And I had to be a man  
Always playing capoeira  
And playing soccer  
And in my job

I never thought about being bad  
Thanks to my Senhor do Bonfim

Because of this I put my hand  
My hand in the fire  
You can go to any police station in the world  
And know my situation

Now I have fought, any young man fights  
Any man fights



## PREJUDICE

At that time, even though their children were poor, the parents didn't want their kids to learn capoeira. Because it was a thing of delinquents. They didn't want their kids to play soccer. So I went in secret. Because capoeira was more violent than today. Today it's more clowning around. In the old days, when a capoeirista managed to give a cabeçada, he knew that he could kill his opponent, or draw blood. When he lifted his leg to give a martelo, he knew that it would hit. Today no. It's just throwing the legs up in the air. Notice that when I play with my students, I lift my legs up all the time, I do aú all the time. I only do this at the right time. Capoeira used to be played within one meter of the other player, so that each one would defend himself.

# TRAINING

Back then I trained capoeira every day.  
I trained the whole day.  
I only worked one shift in the office.  
And I started at 6 P.M. and went until 8 P.M.  
Saturday and Sunday it was the whole day.  
Today I can't anymore because of my age, and I have a knee injury.  
I have trouble doing the things.  
It's what I always say to you:  
I can't do what I used to do forty years ago.



## **THERE WAS PREJUDICE OF WHITES AGAINST BLACKS BUT THERE WERE NO BLACKS WHO PREVENTED WHITES FROM PLAYING CAPOEIRA**

There were always white men playing capoeira: Alemão Guarda, Pirró, Totonho Maré.

**TOTONHO MARÉ WAS WHITE?**

(Indeed he was a mulatto with straight hair)

I'm not joking.

It was possible for a person to be distinguished outside capoeira, but not inside.

There were poor whites, because rich whites didn't go there.

Because that race always had its rich and its poor.

In the old days when you saw a white man, you had fear. You thought he was rich.

Sometimes, he was poorer than you, the black man.

The other day I disagreed with one of my students. We even got annoyed with each other.

I told him to stop being silly: that capoeira has always had whites.